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WOMAN'S PROGRESS IN JAPAN

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A HAPPY JAPANESE MISSIONARY KINDERGARTEN

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THE education of woman in Japan in olden times was better than in other Asiatic countries, but very few women, and chiefly those of the higher classes, received its benefits. Altho it provided knowledge, its great defect was in the exaggeration of subordination at the expense of other womanly qualities. There was no real emancipation for woman in Japan under the old regime. Christianity came to the Island Empire with a positive message, with a command to woman to be and to do.

The Japanese woman's true position and possibilities may best be seen by scanning the changes of fifty years. If within this time she has responded to new inspirations and has manifested innate power, there is encouragement to expect further progress.

The five great epochs of the history of Japanese womanhood correspond to those of the nation's development.

1. In the age of mythology (before 600 A. D.)—which is a veiled period, undated and abbreviated, before the days of clocks or writing—woman's place was relatively high. Japanese mythology speaks of a creatrix. The sun was a female goddess. In the timeless legends rise many striking female figures in times of war and peace.

2. In the early era (600-1200 A. D.) of writing, and the introduction of Chinese civilization, the daughters of Japan achieved a unique record. In the civilizing influences of early Buddhism their potency was primal and immense.

During this period there occurred a striking phenomenon, almost unique in history. It was woman, not man, that made the literary language of Japan and first gave to the young nation works of imagination. The Genji Monogatari (Romance of Prince Genji), by a court lady, who lived in A. D. 1004, is the acknowledged standard of the language.

3. During the medieval period (1200-1600), woman suffered in the endless wars, often illustrating the annals of heroism.

4. During the supremacy of Chinese learning, and the prevalence of Confucianism during the next period, woman entered into a state of subjection and of degradation previously unknown. The cardinal virtues which she was taught were wholly negative—subordination and obedience. The Nemesis of this system is seen in an inundation of female ignorance and lewdness, in a flood of pornographic literature, in the rise of Japan's characteristic institution, the Yoshiwara or licensed prostitution, a system in which the government still glories.

5. The era of Meiji, or of Modern Christianity (1860), is marked by the development of education for girls as well as for boys. The system grew out of missionary object lessons, and in 1871 began on a national scale. There also arose the new figure of the trained nurse, now organized

with her sisters into a great army; the various types of woman's training-schools were established, and a woman's university was founded in Tokyo by a Christian man.

The literature, art and drama of the past picture the national mind, and tell the story of those days. Especially do proverbs, the verbal coinage of experience, show the hideous results of an overwrought doctrine of filial piety—daughters were rented out to men like cattle, or were sold by thousands into a life of gilded misery, disease and premature old age. The atrocious by-word, "A father with many daughters need not fear old age," tells its own story.

From all Japanese, of every shade of religious belief or of none, we hear the unanimous verdict—"Christianity brought a new message to woman."

Fifty years ago the gospel of joy began to move the hearts of Japan's daughters. Some of these, now white-haired, are still teachers, and have been makers of Christian homes or are active in Christian churches.

The first recognition of female education by the Government of Japan was when a young woman, who had been under the instruction of Mrs. J. C. Hepburn of the Presbyterian Mission, was appointed assistant to Miss Margaret Clark Griffis, in the first school opened under government auspices in the castle in Tokyo. To this school with its sixty pupils, daughters of the nobility and gentry, the Empress paid repeated visits. In the book, "Who's Who in Japan," for 1912, we find an astonishing record of graduates of this first school. Many are wives or widows of eminent men,

leaders of the nation, while other private data reveal a remarkable line of teachers and influential women, not a few of whom are Christians.

Passionate pilgrims seeking medical knowledge at Nagasaki, where the Dutchmen had their settlement, were the first harbingers of science and the new day. One of these, seeing that the missionary ladies were helpmates to their husbands, came to Mrs. Hepburn in Yokohama and earnestly requested that his granddaughter might be educated. He did not believe the sentiment—attributed to Confucius—"a stupid woman is less troublesome in the family than one that is wise." Even the Mikado's advisers allowed the strange sentiment to be inserted into the famous Imperial Rescript of 1873: "Japanese women are without understanding."

Mrs. Hepburn gladly gathered about her several young girls and began a school which she conducted for several years and then turned over to Miss Mary E. Kidder.

A high officer once said that this class was "the mustard seed of woman's education in Japan." Full of fire and spirit, Miss Kidder carried on the work for many years, until the Ferris Seminary was organized to conduct woman's education on a larger scale. Today, the Ferris Seminary, supported by the Reformed Church in America, continues the noble work begun a half century ago, and has already sent out into the empire hundreds of Christian women who have founded Christian homes.

In 1870, the idea of the education of Japanese womanhood was slowly percolating into the

brain of Japanese statesmen. The intellectual superiority of refined and educated women, from Christian lands, was manifest when contrasted with even the most attractive of Japanese women, while the awful degradation of the millions of Japanese females was borne in upon the minds of patriots. They were not ashamed of being Japanese, but they were ashamed of the condition into which their women had fallen by the prevalence of degrading ideas.

A patriotic impulse moved the Japanese to action, and Christianity mightily reinforced the desire for improvement. The one most ardent and determined champion of the new ideals for womanhood was General K. Kuroda, who secured the appointment of five young girls to accompany the great embassy of 1872 to the United States. He was ably seconded by Arinori Mori, then minister to the United States.

Three of these girls at least were placed in Christian homes in America and, on their return to Japan, became immensely influential. Two of them married high officers, one in the army and the other in the navy. The youngest, Miss Ume Tsuda, after long service at court, established her famous Christian school for girls in the capital, served as President of the Young Woman's Christian Association in Tokyo, and keeps up vital lines of communication with educationists in America.

Some years later, a Christian man, Dr. Jinzo Naruse, spending a night in a hotel at Osaka, was disgusted and pained by the uproarious noise of revellers of both sexes. He pondered the

Scripture passage, "A virtuous woman who can find?" and came to the conclusion that as long as so many Japanese women were kept in ignorance, with no other outlet for their lives than ministering to man's passions, there would be no decrease of feminine lewdness. Out of that night's thought and prayer to God was born the resolve to establish a Woman's University in Tokyo. He was assisted in this enterprise by a few Japanese statesmen, and for many years the institution has done a noble work in preparing Japanese women to be man's helpmate in serving God and in re-creating the nation.

Unfortunately for Japan, the native officers at the treaty ports believed that the first two commercial necessities were a custom house and a large house of ill-fame. Out of this sprang three growths, as of night-shade, upas and poison ivy, which have cost Japan millions of money and have retarded her civilization. This unfortunate contact of human beings at the selvedges of their civilizations has created the prejudices still strong in the West as to the reputed scoundrelism and dishonesty of the Japanese merchant and the low character of the average Japanese woman, and also—not an opinion but a fact—hundreds of Eurasian children, waifs of society, who know not their fathers.

An earnest appeal was made to the Woman's Union Missionary Society to establish a home in Yokohama for these innocent victims of vice. Mrs. Mary T. Pruyn, Mrs. Louise Pierson, and Miss Julia Crosby were chosen to begin this work, and today Miss Crosby—a white-haired veteran,

MISS MARGARET CLARK GRIFFIS AND HER PUPILS FORTY YEARS AGO

but still full of earnestness and vigor—is at the head of the historic American Mission Home, "212 Bluff," Yokohama.

The work developed into a school exclusively for Japanese girls, and later became a hive of manifold spiritual industries—one might almost call it a Biblical college. Here Dr. Samuel Robbins Brown gathered his Bible classes that filled rooms, stairs, and hallways, as he expounded the Scriptures in the vernacular. Here Okuno, who brought the Day of Pentecost in Japan, preached the first native Christian sermon in modern Japan. Here prayer-meetings were well attended by red-coated British soldiers, encamped on the hills nearby, and by blue jackets from American and other ships of war and peace, and by Europeans and Americans living in the port. Every variety of religious services was carried on in this home for years.

From this school also went forth hundreds of educated Christian women to make the new type of wife, mother and home needed in the new Japan. It is impossible to dilate on the work of Mrs. Louise Pierson, as a Bible reader and a trainer of scores like herself, and of Mrs. Pruyn's labors among the native and foreign women of the ports, or of the service of hundreds of native women, mighty in the scriptures. The records of results are not only visible in hearts and homes and in God's book, but are even as discernible as those glacial striæ on the boulders, which tell of a history of force and movement that out of azoic rock created fertile soil.

Japan took her proper place in the world's family at the "psychological moment." Steam,

electricity and the great inventions of modern times were ready at hand; but, more especially, the noble ideas of Christian centuries had ripened and were brought for gathering. The Japanese hand was also trained for picking; its owner is ever an eclectic.

One of these Christian ideas was the right and privilege of women to labor for their sisters in the Savior's name. "The greatest work of your Christ is the elevation of woman," said a Chinese Mandarin to Andrew Carnegie. This was an evangel to Japanese womanhood, because all the energies of the statesmen of the new regime, after 1868, seemed required to rebuild the nation. Instant and imperious attention to purely national affairs, in which the men were prominent, was demanded. Even the most enlightened statesmen were slow willed or heterodox on the subject of woman's position in civilization and the home. A secret chapter, of which I have the documents, would prove this, but we congratulate Japan on possessing noble pioneers among the missionary women. It is to the everlasting honor of the nation and government that the single women who came to Japan met with so little opposition, or insult, either veiled or open.

From the first, the object lesson of women missionaries and their families was one as powerful as sunshine. Japanese testimony is abundant to prove this. The influence was seen in the home, in the church, through the training of the children, and, like wafted seed, was carried all over the empire by Christian sailors, servants, pupils and acquaintances. From the first, varied methods were adopted for planting and cultivating Christian ideas. Despite stony places, the hard road-

side, and the fowls of the air, much seed ripened to the Glory of God. Schools and churches developed and the new nation was born.

The kindergarten was introduced early, and helped admirably to blend the artistic ideals of the East and the West. The kindergarten has made art a genuine yoke-fellow in the service of the gospel. Especially is this true where American women have had the good sense to recognize how vastly superior to Americans are the Japanese in artistic sense and culture.

One frankly confesses to surprise and wonder that some of the pioneer women should be willing to spend their cultured lives on a missionary's pittance in a distant land, that they might lift up the daughters of the Island Empire. These servants of God have been used to create a new ideal of womanhood in the image of the Christ.

One of the manifestations of a Christian sentiment that developed to oppose the degradation of womanhood was seen in the passing of a law which forbade the incarceration of females against their will in those moral pest houses called the Yoshiwara, provided that all debts against the procurer or slave-master had been discharged. Happily, there were Christian heroes who were brave enough to see to the enforcement of the law. No knight fighting a terrible dragon, or soldier charging to capture the death-dealing cannon, was braver than those who faced the brutal rowdyism of the brothel-keepers. In one year, over ten thousand unfortunate girls and women were set free. At times, the moral torch has burned so brightly that local option against licensed prostitution has

been made effective. On more than one occasion when fire destroyed the disreputable quarters of a town, it seemed as tho the flames of moral earnestness would also scorch out of existence the moral pestilence. Nevertheless, while human passions are so strong and selfishness so great, this evil must be dealt with by slow and patient means. We believe that in its present form this licensed vice in Japan is doomed.

Woman's work in Japan has been like the preparatory work of the farmer in preparing the soil for a coming harvest. The parasites must be removed, stones gathered out, stumps blasted, marshes drained, and seed planted. The real autumnal harvesting of the fruit is coming after years filled with discouragement. Today, Christianity in Japan is deeply rooted below and shows rich fruitage above. Many women are faithful wives of pastors, deacons, and elders; many daughters of Christian homes are serving in the church as deaconesses, or as Sunday School teachers; many others are zealous and useful church members, who keep up the steady fire and furnish fresh supplies of spiritual fuel. A knowledge of human nature explains a great many things; and, as in America, so in Japan, many a pastor has said, with mingled sighing and gladness, "What would the church do without the women?"

The creation of the trained nurse has been a signal triumph of Christianity. Long years before the idea entered the heads of statesmen or publicists, Dr. John C. Berry, M. D., a missionary of the American Board, trained a corps of Japanese women nurses. The Presbyterians, also, had

uniformed female nurses in their hospitals—the first free hospitals opened to the public in Japan. Thus the foundation was laid for the first courses in that superb healing art which is today Japan's glory among the nations of Asia. In 1894 China went to war without even a hospital corps, while Japan had nearly a thousand trained female nurses ready. In 1904, when the clash came with Russia, these ministers of mercy numbered thousands. "As the Hague ordained," the Empire of the now Risen Sun set an example in the treatment of her prisoners and her care of the sick, both native and alien, that surprised the world.

In the higher education of women the government is still very much behind. Perhaps the average Japanese man does not yet take woman seriously as an intellectual companion. The famous Rescript of 1873 called for the education of girls to be "of the same grade as that for men." Yet forty years have passed, and, despite the profuse professions of loyalty to the emperor, the two Women's Higher Normal Schools, in Tokyo and at Nara, with 450 pupils, comprise the state provision for the higher education. These schools simply train teachers for the secondary and primary schools, but make no aim to provide general culture. The government provides no other education for girls above the high school. There is a Woman's Private Medical School in the capital, which has recently received recognition, and women are allowed to attend lectures in the Imperial Universities in Tokyo and Kyoto.

Miss Tsuda's school, besides being distinctively Christian, is the fore-runner of hundreds of

others which shall neither be connected with any mission board nor receive any support from the government, but shall be independent and self-supporting, because of their clientage of Christian families.

In the Doshisha University, in Kyoto, is also a school for girls, but with less than a hundred pupils. It is not under foreign missionary supervision nor government control, but is a thorough Christian school. The crying need today is for a great Christian university for women.

Economic forces are fast driving Japanese women into new fields of activity. Unless they are given higher education with Christian ideals, they will become a menace to the nation.

Despite limitations, the permanent superiority of Christian education has been demonstrated.

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